



Town of Groton, Connecticut

45 Fort Hill Road
Groton, CT 06340-4394
Town Clerk (860)441-6640
Town Manager
(860)441-6630

Meeting Minutes

Representative Town Meeting

Moderator Shirley Dunbar-Rose

Representatives Jeff Armstrong, Joe Baril, Tom Barnhart, Lori Bartinik, Alicia Bauer, Genevieve Cerf, Wayne Chiapperini, Michael Collins, Joe delaCruz, Luanne DeMatto, Susan Dowling, Shirley Dunbar-Rose, George Edwards Jr, Robert Garcia, Patrice Granatosky, Dolores Harrell, Barbara Hoelck, David Miner, Nancy Mitchell, Deborah Monteiro, Matt Morton, Scott Newsome, John Nugent, Nora Patterson, Darcy Peruzzotti, Kevin Power, Don Pratt, Rita Schmidt, Jack Sebastian, Jennifer Smuts, Eleanor Steere, Fritz Stein, Joan Steinfeld, Irma Streeter, Mark Svencer, George Swift, Patti Thunberg, Cheryl Tilney, Tom Vivirito, Robert Walker Sr, and Elizabeth Weil.

Wednesday, October 12, 2005

7:30 PM

Senior Center

Regular Meeting

A. ROLL CALL

*Moderator Shirley Dunbar-Rose called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.
26 members were present and a quorum was declared.*

Members Present: Rep. Barnhart, Rep. Bartinik, Rep. Cerf, Rep. Collins, Rep. Dowling, Rep. Dunbar-Rose, Rep. Granatosky, Rep. Harrell, Rep. Hoelck, Rep. Mitchell, Rep. Monteiro, Rep. M. Morton, Rep. Patterson, Rep. Power, Rep. Schmidt, Rep. Sebastian, Rep. Smuts, Rep. Stein, Rep. Steinfeld, Rep. Streeter, Rep. Svencer, Rep. Thunberg, Rep. Tilney, Rep. Vivirito, Rep. Walker, Sr. and Rep. Weil
Members Absent: Rep. Armstrong, Rep. Baril, Rep. Bauer, Rep. Chiapperini, Rep. delaCruz, Rep. DeMatto, Rep. Edwards, Jr., Rep. Garcia, Rep. Miner, Rep. Newsome, Rep. Nugent, Rep. Peruzzotti, Rep. Pratt, Rep. Steere and Rep. Swift

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Finance Director Sal Pandolfo, Assessor John Philip, CLT's Appraisal Operations Manager Eugenia Flynn, Councilor O'Beirne, Town Clerk Barbara Tarbox and Assistant Town Clerk Sally Whitney.

B. MOMENT OF SILENCE AND SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The members observed a moment of silence followed by the Salute to the Flag led by Rep. Schmidt.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF AUGUST 10, 2005

A motion to approve the minutes of August 10, 2005 was made by Rep. Schmidt, seconded by Rep. Vivirito and so voted unanimously.

D. CITIZENS' PETITIONS

None.

E. RECEPTION OF COMMUNICATIONS

Moderator Dunbar-Rose reported that Reps. Garcia and Miner are unable to attend. She announced that a memo from Dr. Mitchell was distributed to all members prior to the meeting. The memo addressed how the Board of Education measures student achievement and what they are doing to help the students improve. She stated that she received a communication from the Children's Museum of Southeastern Connecticut asking if the Town of Groton was interested in hosting a new expanded facility.

Rep. Power introduced Gaylen Yeoman who is visiting from South Africa and is observing tonight how our local government operates.

2005-0251

Release of State Land - Route 117/Candlewood Road

RELEASE OF STATE LAND - ROUTE 117/CANDLEWOOD ROAD

This matter was Referred to the RTM Public Works Committee, due back on December 14, 2005. The motion carried.

Referred to PW in error. This item was subsequently referred to C&ED.

2005-0169

Donation of Land (Poirier)

DONATION OF LAND (POIRIER)

This matter was Referred to the RTM Public Works Committee, due back on December 14, 2005. The motion carried.

Referred to PW in error. This item was subsequently referred to C&ED.

Revaluation Update Presentation

Finance Director Sal Pandolfo introduced Assessor John Philip and Eugenia Flynn from Tyler Technologies/CLT. She is the Appraisal Operations Manager from CLT for the Town's 2005 revaluation. Mr. Pandolfo stated he would not be able to predict the impact on taxes at this time. He reviewed the revaluation process from August 2004 and presented the timetable of key events from now to July 1, 2006.

Ms. Flynn stated that this presentation was presented to the Council and that it will be presented to the Fire Districts to educate the citizens of Groton with regards to the process of revaluation. She explained the reasons why the revaluations are done, and the details involved to gather data, analyze collected data, build and test valuation models, inform the public, disclose values and conduct informal taxpayer reviews. She stated that historically from 1998-2004 Groton residential properties have appreciated at an average annual rate of 13.23%.

Ms. Flynn responded to Rep. Cerf's inquiry on the appreciation and ratio of residential value versus commercial values. She stated that commercial buildings become obsolete quickly and are not reusable as are residential properties. Therefore the commercial values do not increase as rapidly as residential value.

In response to Rep. Walker's question, Ms. Flynn explained that it is very difficult to appraise and value land-locked properties. She suggested that owners of this type of property should arrange a meeting with CLT to discuss this individually since it is such a rare and unique occurrence. The Town Manager responded to Rep. Walker's question about the taxability of the privatized Navy housing. The Manager stated that the Navy housing property is not taxable under the current understanding in order to maintain the Town's eligibility to receive approximately \$5 million in federal impact aid. He reported that the Assessor had estimated that if the property were taxed that it would only generate about \$1 million dollars in revenue. The Town Manager stated the Town is researching whether some housing units have been rented to civilian families and what effect it would have on the Town's federal impact aid. He stated that the Town is monitoring this situation and that a referral has been made to the Town Council.

Ms. Flynn answered an inquiry from Rep. Collins by stating that the appraisal sales data are subjective and that by following established models the company maintains an objective view. She stated that this revaluation should be more reflective of how values have changed since it has been only four years from the last revaluation instead of ten years. She invited residents to take advantage of meeting individually with CLT to discuss any questions on their property evaluation.

John Philip replied to Rep. Sebastian that he will know the shift between commercial, residential and industrial property when the Grand List is signed.

The Moderator called for a five minute recess at 8:15 p.m.

The meeting was reconvened at 8:22 p.m.

F. REPORT OF THE TOWN MANAGER:

1. Financial report

The Town Manager reported that the Fund Balance as of July 1, 2005 is approximately \$9.1 million, the Capital Reserve Fund balance is \$3,193,615, which is an increase from the last report since the landfill and golf course repaid their loans and interest has accumulated. The General Contingency balance for FYE 2006 was appropriated at \$350,000 and the Town Manager expects to request fund transfers at the end of December or January due to the unexpected increase in fuel costs.

2. Monthly briefing

The Town Manager reported on the recent federal advisory opinion concerning lever voting machines. He estimates that the conversion cost to the Town could be \$550,000 up to \$800,000. This item will be referred to the Council and the Manager will provide additional information when it is available.

Mr. Oefinger mentioned that the Town is holding a neighborhood meeting concerning the Northeast Academy Elementary School project on October 19th.

He announced that the Victory Celebration for Groton's removal from the BRAC list is scheduled for October 20 at the Mystic Marriott, and the 25th Senior Center Anniversary Dinner/Dance and the Martin Luther King Scholarship Dinner are both scheduled for October 27. He requested that anyone interested in attending to contact his office.

In response to an e-mail received from Rep. Sebastian, the Manager addressed the following items.

The revaluation questions were addressed this evening by the presentation from CLT.

The dredging of the Mystic River has not been completed and no money has been spent since the Town has been unsuccessful in contracting and scheduling a private contractor.

He reported that a consultant has been hired for the Flanders Road water/sewer line extension study and he expects a report by the end of November. He stated that approximately \$19,000 has been spent.

In response to Rep. Power, the Town Manager stated that the Board of Education will decide what area will be served by the Northeast Academy School. He stated that the Town is responsible for the construction, sidewalks and roads.

Rep. Granatosky reported that a recent Groton Times news article in which an RTM member stated that Groton had a mandatory 6% budget increase was corrected by the Town Manager's office. She commented that by her recollection there was not a mandatory 6% increase last year or in any of the last 10 years.

Rep. Cerf apologized and explained that during a recent interview by the Groton Times, she inadvertently provided the erroneous budget information.

G. LIAISON REPORTS**1. Town Council - Rep. Cerf**

Rep. Cerf reported on the Council meetings of September 6 and 20, 2005. She commented that the Council approved a portion of the Merritt property to be used for temporary parking for Fitch High School during the school construction period. The Council approved both a \$1,000 donation to American Red Cross for Hurricane Relief and a request for a Ryka Women's Fitness Grant of \$5,000. The Council appointed Richard McCarthy to the Parks and Recreation Commission, Frank O'Beirne and Mary Lou Smith to the Southeastern Water Authority Advisory Board.

2. Economic Development Commission - Rep. Schmidt

No meeting, no report.

3. Town Council/Board of Education Liaison Committee - Rep. Patterson

Rep. Patterson reported on the meeting held on September 22, 2005. Discussion was held about using 10 acres of the Merritt property as temporary parking during the construction period at Fitch High School. Also discussed were the Governor's budget and the fact that Groton received more Education Cost sharing money than was expected.

4. Permanent School Building Committee - Rep. Miner

No meeting, no report.

5. P.B.F.D. Consolidation Review Committee - Reps. Steinfeld & Svencer

Rep. Steinfeld reported that the draft interim report was discussed. The committee feels there is a need for a town-wide fire protection study to assess the quality and equity of fire protection for all citizens of Groton. The committee recognizes the excellent job done by Groton's volunteer fire companies. The committee concluded that a study of all fire district services is needed with a cost analysis. The committee will recommend a study to the Council.

6. Economic Development Strategic Planning Steering Ctee - Reps. Dowling & Mitchell

Rep. Dowling reported on the meeting of September 29, 2005. The committee received a draft of the preliminary project list for review. The next meeting is scheduled for October 27, 2005 to review a preliminary draft of the policy recommendations.

7. Shellfish Task Force - Rep. Svencer

No meeting, no report.

H. COMMITTEE REPORTS**1. FINANCE****a. Chairman's notes of the business of the Town - Chairman Schmidt**

Rep. Schmidt read the minutes of the meeting held on October 12, 2005.

A motion to accept the minutes was made by Rep. Vivirito, seconded by Rep. Power and so voted unanimously.

2005-0235 Board of Education Contribution to Health Insurance Account

Board of Education Contribution to Health Insurance Account

Deleted from Referral List - No further action

2. COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**a. Chairman's notes of the business of the Town - Chairman Pratt**

No meeting, no report.

3. EDUCATION**a. Chairman's notes of the business of the Town - Chairman Newsome**

No meeting, no report.

4. HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES**a. Chairman's notes of the business of the Town - Chairman DeMatto**

No meeting, no report.

5. RECREATION**a. Chairman's notes of the business of the Town - Chairman Power**

No meeting, no report.

6. PUBLIC SAFETY**a. Chairman's notes of the business of the Town - Chairman Vivirito**

No meeting, no report.

7. PUBLIC WORKS**a. Chairman's notes of the business of the Town - Chairman Collins**

Rep. Collins read the minutes of the meeting held on October 5, 2005.

A motion to accept the minutes was made by Rep. Smuts, seconded by Rep. Walker and so voted unanimously.

2005-0250 Fund Transfer - Military Highway Retaining Walls**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING A TRANSFER OF FUNDS FOR MILITARY HIGHWAY
RETAINING WALLS**

WHEREAS, the Town Department of Public Works found that the retaining walls on Military Highway are failing and has solicited bids for their repair and replacement, and

WHEREAS, the lowest of three bids (\$219,430) for the project exceeds the amount of \$210,000 that was appropriated in the FYE 2005 capital improvement budget, and

WHEREAS, funds are available from a completed FYE 2004 project concerning the ventilation in Town Hall Annex, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Town Council approves the transfer of \$15,000 from the FYE 2004 CIP account number 50103.5579, titled "Major Mechanical Replacements, Various Buildings," to a new FYE 2004 Capital Improvement Project titled "Retaining Wall Replacement, Military Highway."

Refer to RTM, Rule 6.5.3

A motion was made by Rep. Collins, seconded by Rep. Walker, Sr., that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously.

8. RULES & PROCEDURES**a. Chairman's notes of the business of the Town - Chairman Weil**

No meeting, no report.

I. OTHER BUSINESS

Moderator Dunbar-Rose recognized the following members who are not seeking re-election to the RTM; Reps. dela Cruz, Armstrong, Swift, Weil, Hoelck, Montiero, Mitchell, Chiapperini, and Peruzzotti. It was pointed out that Moderator Dunbar-Rose is also not seeking re-election. The Moderator thanked the Town Clerk, the Manager and their respective staffs, RTM Floor Leaders, RTM representatives and RTM Committee Chairpersons for their respect, cooperation, support and hours of work during her term as Moderator.

J. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn at 9:08 p.m. was made by Rep. Smuts, seconded by Rep. Walker and so voted unanimously.

Attest:

*Barbara Tarbox, Town Clerk
Clerk of the RTM*

Sally A. Whitney, Assistant Town Clerk